Mayors' Institute on City Design

Spring 2001 Newsletter

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Meridian

Design Leadership in Meridian, Mississippi

Meridian, Mississippi, Mayor John Robert Smith attended the twenty-fifth session of the Mayors' Institute on City Design in 1999. He presented a design proposal for the rebirth of the city's Grand Opera House, along with two adjacent former department store buildings, as an education and conference center for the arts. The discussion involved the development of public support and funding for the facility, as well as design strategies for the necessary parking.

Mayor John Robert Smith

Kidsville U.S.A., class of 1999-2000

Mayor John Robert Smith is no stranger to the difficulties in developing public support for city projects. In 1991, while still a member of the city council, John Robert Smith envisioned the reconstruction of a downtown rail station that would be a transportation hub for the city and a catalyst for downtown revitalization.

Union Station was once an important stop along the Crescent Line that ran from New York City to New Orleans, and Smith wanted Meridian to capitalize on its railroad heritage and restore AMTRAK service to the city. In June 1991, the Mississippi Department of Transportation approved the use of Federal Transit Administration Planning funds for a feasibility study on the development of the Union Station Multi-Modal Transportation Center (MMTC). Smith led efforts to assemble a design team and hold a series of town meetings to develop public support and design principles for the MMTC. It was a bold and innovative move that led to Smith's election as mayor in 1993.

After securing support and funding, which came from a variety of local, state, and federal sources, construction began in 1996. More than $10 million in private investment in the surrounding area followed, leading to the creation of new business offices, housing, commercial and retail development. Union Station has also won two prestigious design awards, one from the International Downtown Association and another from the Mississippi Chapter of the American Institute of Architects.

After Union Station opened in 1998, Mayor Smith began to focus on a new vision: the restoration of the city's 1889 Grand Opera House as an arts education and performance center. Even with the success of the MMTC project behind him, Mayor Smith faced significant challenges. Previous efforts had failed to identify a compelling use for the facility, and a bond issue for the rehabilitation had been defeated in the early 1990's. The building itself was in such poor condition that it was only months away from being torn down under the City's "demolition by neglect" laws. Private owners of nearby property held off rehabilitation projects of their own, waiting to see what would happen to the Opera House.

Mayor Smith found an important partner in President Malcolm Portera of Mississippi State University. At a meeting on the old wooden stage of the Grand Opera House, President Portera convinced a group of deans and vice presidents from the University that the building had great potential to become the regional conference facility that the school needed. The next challenge was to find funding for the anticipated $26 million cost of renovation. Luckily, a recently established local foundation was able to make an significant contribution to that effort.

In 1998, when the Riley Memorial Hospital was sold to Health Management Associates for over $60 million, the Riley family established the Riley Foundation to support community wide programs in health care, education and the betterment of cultural, environmental and economic conditions for the people of Meridian and Lauderdale County. Recognizing its cultural, educational and economic importance, the Foundation pledged $10 million to the project.

With the support of these two institutions behind him, Mayor Smith turned to the community for further help. Confident that the project would boost the downtown economic mix, strengthen property values, spark private-sector development and serve as a role model for cities around the country, Mayor Smith was able to enlist the support of The Meridian Public Schools, Meridian Council for the Arts, Meridian Little Theater, Meridian Symphony Orchestra Association, East Mississippi Business Development Corporation and many others.

The project was still significantly underfunded. How could the Mayor get others to invest? These topics were discussed at the Mayors' Institute session that Mayor Smith attended. Following advice from his fellow mayors at the institute, the City of Meridian pledged to construct a $7 million, 500 car parking facility. The county pledged $3 million, and $6 million was to come from federal funds. The project received a a $400,000 preservation grant from the White House Millennium Council's Save America's Treasures program. The remaining funds would have to come from private sources.

With these important steps well underway, Mayor Smith turned his efforts to coordination. Committees were formed to develop timelines, create liaisons with architects, developers, foundations, and the business community. Even students at MSU got involved, with architecture students creating alternative proposals for the design of the facility.

Construction has begun and Meridian is well on its way to having an important new cultural resource. Mississippi State will own and operate the conference and education center, and public school students from kindergarten through 12th grade will regularly attend classes and training sessions at the center. And for the first time in decades new theatre, music and dance productions from around the country will entertain audiences in the Grand Opera House. It is a remarkable accomplishment for a city with a population of less than 50,000, and a testament to the vision and perseverance of Mayor Smith, President Portera, and the people of Meridian.

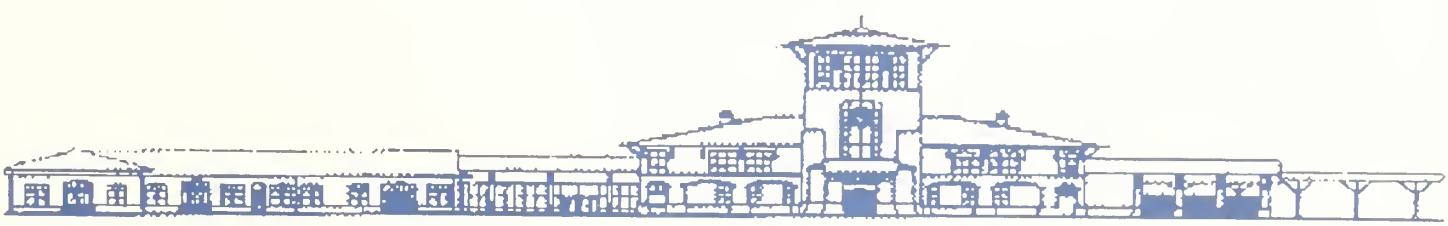
Mayor Smith's dedication to arts education and the art of city building is demonstrated in another significant, if less tangible way, through a project called "Kidsville." With his participation in this program, the Mayor helps public school children understanding public service. The program was started by Patti Edwards, a teacher at Parkview Elementary School.

The idea began as a social studies project to bring real life situations to the classroom. Mrs. Edwards wanted students to better understand some of the duties and responsibilities that their parents have as citizens. The program also studies communities from around the world and the different resources that are available to those communities.

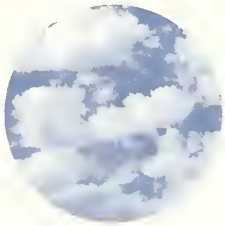
Every year, Mrs. Edwards' third grade class develops a model of a town with streets and street signs, buildings and businesses, and recreational facilities. The model evolves from year to year, as the students must build on the decisions made by their predecessors. They choose a job, make business cards, and rent their own post office boxes. They practice good habits like not littering their city streets (class floor), keeping their homes and yards clean (their desks), and driving their cars carefully around the city streets (the way they walk inside the classroom). The students also have a monetary system called "KidBucks" which rewards them for good attendance and allows them to pay rent on their house, mailbox, insurance, and utilities.

Each November the students hold a mock elections for a mayor and city council, roles that the winners will hold for the rest of the year. Students establish relationships with the officials who actually hold those offices, and at the end of the year, the students spend the day with their counterpart so that they can see the role in real life. Mayor John Robert Smith attends these mock elections and spends time with the class each September and October to assist the children in preparing for the elections.

At a Founders Day party at the end of the year, the children present Mayor Smith with a book that explains, in their own words, what they have learned about public service. One of the things that they learn is that city design is an ongoing process that builds on the vision and efforts of those who have gone before, and in which many people play a role. ☆



Union Station Multi-Modal Transportation Center in Meridian, Mississippi (elevation drawing)
DRAWING: B B ARCHER, ARCHER ARCHITECTS, PLLC



"Smart Code" Brings Increased Reuse of Historic Buildings to New Jersey Cities

Downtown historic buildings in New Jersey are experiencing a Renaissance. The catalyst for this new surge of energy is New Jersey's Rehabilitation Subcode. The Subcode is credited for a 42 percent increase in rehabilitation spending in the state in 1998, and has been hailed by Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government as one of the most innovative, cutting-edge government programs of 1999.

The irony in the innovation of the Rehabilitation Subcode ideology is that its guiding principles are rooted in common sense. Modern building codes, when applied toward rehabilitation of an existing structure, are often impossible to meet. For example, a hotel to be renovated may have hallways with a width of 38 inches, but the modern building code requires 48-inches. Widening the hallway would add a huge expense to an already costly project, causing most developers and investors walk away. New Jersey's Rehabilitation Subcode allows for more flexible, creative, and efficient solutions for rehabilitation. This not only attracts investors but also allows for the nature of the building to be maintained in its intended design while still preserving public safety.

The immediate results following the implementation of the rehab subcode are impressive. In 1998, the first year of the program, rehabilitation of historic buildings rose by 59 percent in Newark, 84 percent in Jersey City, and 40 percent in Trenton. Compare these figures with the increase in rehab in 1997 of only 3.6 percent.

New Jersey's success has begun to attract the attention of leaders throughout the country. Maryland's Governor Parris N. Glendening was the first to follow New Jersey's lead at a state level, initiating a law to create a 'smart code' in building redevelopment as part of his continuing efforts to halt suburban sprawl and return vitality to historic urban neighborhoods.

In October 1999 the Rehabilitation Subcode received an Innovations in American Government Award, a highly competitive program of the Ford Foundation and the Kennedy School of Government. The award acknowledges innovative government programs that present novel, effective solutions to significant problems, and that can be replicated by other government entities. Since the introduction of the award in 1986 over 85 percent of the awarded programs have had successfully replicated programs.

Three cheers to New Jersey for their smart, economical, efficient, and effective innovations in city revitalization. ⁂

To obtain a copy of New Jersey's Rehabilitation Subcode Subchapter 6 contact Cecilia Heredia, Department of Community Affairs, Publications Unit, P.O. Box 802, Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0802. To ask for assistance in understanding specifics within the code write to Code Assistance, Department of Community Affairs, P.O. Bow 802, Trenton New Jersey, 08625-0802.

Mayor Joseph Riley PHOTO DANIEL GROGAN PHOTOGRAPHY © 1999

Mayor Riley Receives Major Award from the Urban Land Institute

The founder of the Mayors Institute on City Design, Mayor Joseph P. Riley, Jr. of Charleston (MICD 1 1986) has been named the first recipient of the J.C. Nichols Prize for Visionary Urban Development by the Urban Land Institute. This prize was established in January, 2000, to recognize "an individual whose career demonstrates a commitment to the highest standards of responsible development." The $100,000 prize, named in honor of Kansas City developer and founding ULI member J. C. Nichols (1880-1950), rewards those who provide unique leadership by inspiring urban development that enhances the overall quality of life in America's communities.

Through the leadership of Mayor Riley, Charleston has achieved an urban revival that is an inspiration for cities across the United States. Since Mayor Riley was first elected in 1975, Charleston has seen a substantial decrease in crime, revitalized its historic downtown district, created a highly successful waterfront park, and increased its supply of affordable housing. In May, Mayor Riley presided at the opening of the South Carolina Aquarium, which showcases exhibits of the state's waterways from the mountains to the sea.

Mayor Riley achieved another first in June at the 68th Annual Conference of Mayors when Conference President Wellington Webb (MICD 19 1995) presented him with the newly-named President's Award. ⁂

Mayors' Institute Honored with Presidential Award for Design Excellence

Former President Clinton and First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton honored the Mayors' Institute on City Design with the Presidential Award for Design Excellence for the year 2000 in a ceremony at D.A.R. Constitution Hall on December 20, 2000. These awards recognize projects that exemplify the highest standards of federal design in architecture, landscape architecture, urban design and planning, historic preservation, interior design, engineering, graphic and product design, and industrial design. In recognizing the recipients, Clinton noted "their work reflects the breadth and genius of American design, and their efforts have contributed immeasurably to the quality of life in our nation."

The Mayors' Institute was acknowledged for its achievement in winning the award at the U.S. Conference of Mayors' Annual Winter Meeting on Thursday, January 18, during the luncheon honoring London Mayor Ken Livingstone. Mayor Joseph P. Riley, Jr., Mayor of the City of Charleston, SC and founder of the Mayors' Institute, received the award and gave a brief summary of the history of the institute to his colleagues.

In its citation, the awards jurors remarked that the Mayors' Institute on City Design shows mayors how to analyze a project in terms of its long range impact, both fiscally and visually. Mayors come away from a workshop with greater confidence in their own innate design sense. At the end of the day, the Institute affects how America's cities and towns get built by educating the builders." ⁂

Call for Entries: EDRA and *Places* Annual Award for Place Design, Planning and Research

Places Magazine and the Environmental Design Research Association (EDRA) announce their fourth annual awards for Place Design, Planning and Research. They are seeking nominations for exemplary projects from any design or related discipline, such as architecture, landscape architecture, urban design, planning, lighting design, interior design, graphic design, geography, sociology and psychology. Awards will be presented in July, 2001, at EDRA's annual meeting. Winning projects and commentary will be published in the Fall, 2001 issue of *Places*. ⁂

Official entry forms are available now;
the receipt deadline for entries is March 2, 2001.
For more information contact:
Janet Singer, Executive Director
Environmental Design Research Association
1800 Canyon Park Circle, Building 4, Suite 403
Edmond, OK 73013
Phone: (405) 330-4863
Fax: (405) 330-4150
Email: edra@telepath.com
Web: www.telepath.com/edra/

Recent Events

Event	Resource Team	Mayors and Design Issues

MICD: 27

April 2000
Charlottesville, VA
University of Virginia

Julie Bargmann
landscape architect, educator

Ben Boozer
community consultant

Mario Gandelsonas
architect, educator

Toni L. Griffin
planner

Frances Halsband
architect

Joseph P. Riley, Jr.
(keynote) *mayor*

Marilyn Taylor
urban designer, architect

Don Zuchelli
urban economist

Bob Baines *Manchester, NH*
The city would like to make Hanover Street a cultural destination. What is the best design approach for the city to achieve its goals?

Bill Bogaard *Pasadena, CA*
East Colorado Blvd. needs a more mixed use of commercial and housing developments. What is the most effective way to direct this process?

Bruce Furness *Fargo, ND*
The city would like to redevelop its civic center site. How best can the site be utilized to enhance the downtown area?

Ray Martinez *Fort Collins, CO*
The downtown historical district needs to be strengthened. How can the city engage property owners to establish a vision for long term redevelopment efforts?

Rita Mullins *Palatine, IL*
A masterplan has been created to invigorate the central business district. What are the best approaches to determining where the density of the development should take place?

Tom Murphy *Pittsburgh, PA*
The redevelopment of the East Liberty area is underway. How should new retail development be designed so that it supports the entire district?

Bill Purcell *Nashville, TN*
The Rolling Mill area is being redeveloped. What is the best plan for this development to interface with existing buildings?

Don Wesely *Lincoln, NE*
The largest public works project in Lincoln's history is being initiated. How should the city develop the landscape design?

MICD: 28

November 2000
La Jolla, California
The Neuroscience Institute

Julie Eizenberg
architect

Carlos Jimenez
architect, educator

John Kaliski, AIA
architect, educator

Richard Koshalek
president and CEO of ACCD, and architect (keynote)

Tom Leader
landscape architect

Charnelle Hicks
planner

Jeff Chusid
architect, educator

Mayor Stephen Luecke *South Bend, IN*
How can South Bend connect the fragmented sections of the City to create a more cohesive image of the city as well as maximize the private investments in the community?

Mayor Vicki Reynolds *Beverly Hills, CA*
Beverly Hills is hoping to reinvent the eastern section of Wilshire Boulevard. What is the appropriate balance between the City's need to guide development and the need for residential compatibility and commercial vitality?

Mayor Graham Richard *Fort Wayne, IN*
A new sports arena is being planned for downtown Fort Wayne. What is the best approach to designing the building so that it creates a more pedestrian friendly space incorporated within the downtown?

Mayor Euline *Brock, Denton, TX*
Denton's central courthouse was recently placed on the National Register of Historic Places. What are the guidelines that should be followed in writing a design code to preserve the integrity of the Courthouse Square?

MICD: GSA

December 2000
Washington, DC
The American Institute of Architects

Glenn Allen
landscape architect

Fernando Costa
planner

Toni L. Griffin
planner

Duncan R. Hazard, AIA
architect

Wellington Reiter
architect, educator

Bing Thom
architect

Mayor Robert Short *Gulfport, MS*
Gulfport has recently commissioned the design of a new modern high-rise courthouse to be used in conjunction with a historic high school building which will receive some alterations before becoming a courthouse. How can the modern design of the new structure be incorporated in the historic neighborhood and what are appropriate methods to handle the influx of parking?

Mayor Michael Albano *Springfield, MA*
GSA directed a courthouse to be built in the early 1980s in the heart of the downtown. The building is particularly unattractive and formidable. What are the possibilities for Springfield to reactivate the building?

Mayor Elizabeth Flores *Laredo, TX*
The City is planning to redesign the oldest bridge connecting Laredo to its Mexican sister city, Nuevo Laredo. The bridge redesign is planned in conjunction with a greater neighborhood revitalization plan. How can Laredo link the new facilities with the retail and historic sections of the existing downtown?

Mayor Lee Clancey *Cedar Rapids, IA*
A new courthouse is in the initial stages of design in Cedar Rapids. What elements of design would allow for the courthouse to serve as a gateway to the city, be pedestrian friendly, and integrate into the downtown as well as the waterfront redevelopment plan?

Mayor William A. Johnson, Jr. *Rochester, NY*
Rochester is planning the construction of a new courthouse in conjunction with the City's efforts to revitalize an adjacent park on the waterfront. In what ways can the City maximize these developments to spark further growth in the central business district?

Announcements

The **2000 City Livability Program Award** winners were announced in Seattle at the **68th Annual Conference of Mayors** in June. City Livability Awards recognize and honor mayors for exemplary leadership in developing and implementing programs that improve the quality of life in America's cities. Among the winners were Tacoma (**Mayor Brian Ebersole**, MICD 8 1990) and Stamford (**Mayor Daniel Malloy**, MICD 24 1998) for **Outstanding Achievement for Cities Under 100,000**; Buffalo (**Mayor Anthony Masiello** MICD 19 1995) and Toledo (**Mayor Carty Finkbeiner**, MICD 18 1995) for **Honorable Mention for Cities Over 100,000**.

Alumni **Mayor Norm Coleman** of St. Paul (MICD 19 1995) received the **Woodrow Wilson Award for Public Service** on June 24. The award recognizes outstanding political leadership that exemplifies President Woodrow Wilson's commitment to maintaining and expanding an intellectual foundation as the basis for public service.

Alumni **Mayors William A. Johnson, Jr.** of Rochester (NY) MICD 8 1990, **Pat McCory** of Charlotte, MICD 21 1996, **Susan Savage** of Tulsa, MICD 17 1994, Mayor **Brent Coles** of Boise, MICD West 1994, and **Rosemary Corbin** of Richmond (CA) MICD West 1994, were profiled in the **June 2000 issue of Architectural Record** in an article on Smart Growth

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The twin cities of Fargo (**Mayor Bruce Furness**, MICD 27 2000) and Moorehead, MN (Mayor **Morris Lanning**, MICD Midwest 1999) and the City of Lancaster, PA (Mayor **Charlie Smithgall**, MICD Northeast 1998) were named **All America Cities** by the **National Civic League and the Allstate Insurance Company**. The cities of Tempe (**Mayor Neil Giuliano**, MICD West 1995), Toledo (**Mayor Carty Finkbeiner**, MICD 18 1995), and York, PA (**Mayor Charles Robertson**, MICD Northeast 1995) were **finalists**.

The American Society of Landscape Architects announced the winners of its annual awards program in November. Among the honorees were Hartford, CT (**Mayor Mike Peters**, MICD 1 1994) for a riverfront park; and Richmond, VA (**Mayor Timothy Kaine**, MICD 26 1999) for the revitalization of the city's historic canal area.

The International Downtown Association announced its **Downtown Achievement Awards** on September 18, at its annual conference in Los Angeles. Among the honorees were Charlotte (**Mayor Pat McCrory**, MICD 21 1996), which received a **Merit Award in Planning** for the public process in which the Charlotte Center City 2010 Plan was developed; Reno (**Mayor Jeff Griffin**, MICD 22 1997), which received a **Merit Award for Events and Festivals** for its "Reno is ARTown" festival; and Pittsburgh (**Mayor Tom Murphy**, MICD 27 2000), which received an **Outstanding Achievement Award** for its Cultural District.

The Waterfront Center announced its **Year 2000 Excellence on the Waterfront Awards** at its annual conference in October. Among the honorees were the Marina Bay project in Richmond, CA (**Mayor Rosemary Corbin**, MICD West 1994) for commercial and mixed use; and Above the Falls: A Masterplan for the Upper River in Minneapolis, MN (**Mayor Sharon Sayles Belton**, MICD 16 1994) for comprehensive waterfont plans.

Upcoming Events

MICD: 29
Apr 18–20, 2001
Charlottesville, VA

MICD: 30
Oct 17–29, 2001
La Jolla, California

MICD: South
May 23–25, 2001
Tulane University

MICD: Northeast
Dates TBA
Princeton University

MICD: Midwest
June 7-9, 2001
University of Cincinnati

Contact the Mayors' Institute for more information.

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United States Conference of Mayors

American Architectural Foundation

The Mayors' Institute on City Design Newsletter

The Mayors' Institute on City Design is an initiative established by the **National Endowment for the Arts** and administered through a partnership with the United States Conference of Mayors and the American Architectural Foundation.

The Mayors' Institute is dedicated to improving the design and livability of America's Cities.